

Doubters of Warren Report

Kennedy Murder Still Keeps Skeptics Busy Investigating

By Martin Waldron

FREDERICK, Md., Nov. 21 (NYT).—The day begins at 5 a.m. for Harold Weisberg, former agent of the Office of Strategic Services and occasional investigator for the Senate, who for the last few years has been on a personal crusade to find out the truth about the Kennedy assassination.

Shortly after Mr. Weisberg begins stirring in the chill Maryland dawn, Penn Jones Jr., a short, stubby newspaper editor 1,500 miles away in Midlothian, Texas, drives out to his farm to check on his cows, then on to the office of the weekly Midlothian Mirror. Mr. Jones has the same hobby.

Together, they are the unofficial leaders and sometime friends of a legion of Americans who do not believe the Warren Commission report that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone when he shot and killed President Kennedy and who are still conducting private investigations into that assassination.

Even after 10 years, Mr. Jones can be reduced to almost incoherent outrage by a discussion of the Warren Commission investigation. "There are deliberate errors in the volumes" of the Warren Commission testimony, he said several days ago.

Mr. Jones, a retired general in the Texas National Guard who has won national honors for courage in journalism, estimates that 100 to 200 persons are still working full-time, investigating the murder.

Mr. Jones is the developer of a theory that there is a conspiracy in the United States to murder everyone who has any pertinent knowledge about the Kennedy assassination. Thus far, he has compiled a list of 72 suspicious deaths and says there may be more than 100.

He tends to agree in principle with New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison that Kennedy was killed by the federal government with the connivance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency and at least the tacit approval of the late President Johnson.

Mr. Garrison brought a New Orleans playwright, Clay Shaw, to trial on a charge of conspiring to murder Kennedy, but the jury acquitted Mr. Shaw.

Mr. Weisberg, who has published four well-received and carefully researched books about the assassination, says that the circumstances of Kennedy's murder cry out conspiracy. He says he views the Warren Commission investigation as a "whitewash," the name he gave to three of his books.

He says the commission did not find the truth about the assassination because the "government faced a political need" to calm the nation. "We may never know the truth," he said.

Both Mr. Weisberg and Mr. Jones are impressed by a new crop of skeptics who began studying the assassination for historical reasons and found themselves not being convinced by the available evidence.

One of them, Mr. Weisberg says, is Howard Rossman of Philadelphia, a young historian whose "scholarly work" on the assassination is now in the process of being published.

Another is Paul Hoch of Berkeley, Calif., a young physicist who, Mr. Weisberg says, has undertaken a "most precise" examination of the evidence that the Warren Commission took.

Not all the current activity is by skeptics, however. A former member of the Warren Commission staff, David Belin, has just published a new book, "You Are the Jury," trying to bolster the commission's finding that Oswald was the lone assassin.

Most of the doubt of the Warren Commission's finding has been based on conflicting statements by witnesses. But these views have been backed in recent years by scientific inquiry.

Dr. Cyril H. Wecht, coroner of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, said last year after studying autopsy material that had been kept secret for almost eight years: "From a hard physical evidentiary standpoint, there was more than one person shooting. The single-bullet theory is absolute nonsense."

The Warren Commission concluded that one bullet pierced Kennedy's neck, went through the chest of then Texas Gov. John B. Connally Jr., and then through Mr. Connally's wrist into his leg.

"Once that theory is destroyed, we must conclude that more than one person fired," said Dr. Wecht, who is past president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences.

Leo Janos, a Time magazine writer and a former aide of President Johnson, said that Johnson had told him a short time before his death that he had never believed Oswald acted alone.

Writing in the Atlantic Monthly, Mr. Janos said that Johnson had told him that "a year or so before Kennedy's death," a CIA-backed assassination team had been picked up in Havana. Johnson speculated that Dallas had been a retaliation for this thwarted attempt "to kill Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

Three years ago, one of the dozens of attorneys who conducted investigations for the Warren Commission said that many of the contradictions in the commission's report were "more apparent than real," and that a good editor could have reconciled many of the contradictions and omissions that have fueled a decade of doubt.

FROM H.L. MAYER, JR.
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